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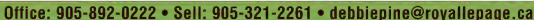
Cindy Raskob

Roy Hry, president and board member of Pro Action Cops and Kids, Jeffrey McGuire, Niagara Regional Police chief, and Peter Papp, Pelham Ward 3 councillor, get ready for a day of golf. The 19th annual golf tournament raises funds for ProAction Cops and Kids was held at Lookout Point Country Club. ProAction Cops and Kids supports police led programs in different regions. "It's not what they do, it's the time spent with the kids," said McGuire. McGuire is director of ProAction Cops and Kids. Regional Police Chief Jeff McGuire, Niagara said the programs help children in the community connect with police officers to build understanding and it helps police to be more visible in the community. The golf tournament raised more than \$100,000.

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UPFRONT

■ **CHURCH:** Updated sanctuary celebrated



FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Pelham Community Church members and special guests cut the ribbon to celebrate the official opening of their expansion on Sunday.

Pelham Community Church opens new expansion

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

Pelham Community Church officially opened the expansion of its sanctuary Sunday.

On the same year as the church celebrates its 150th anniversary, the congregation is also celebrating the remodelling other spaces in

the church.

"This is a major expansion of the sanctuary space of this church, and we decided to go to flexible seating which allows us to use it as a sanctuary space for worship, it allows us to use it for dinners, for other activities or community rental, that kind of thing," said Bert Durst, member and past-president

of the church and chairman of the opening ceremony.

Durst said building the expansion on the same level as the original church allowed the congregation to open a youth room below.

"By building it on the same level as the original church we got a youth room in the downstairs which we badly needed, which

has nice windows that are exposed to the south," he said.

The church on Canboro Road has seen many changes throughout its history. It still has some original walls, even with the transformed interior.

The Pelham church inherited eight stained glass windows from the Port Dal-

housie St. Andrew's United Church which closed last year.

Two of the windows are displayed in the entranceway of the church and six more within the sanctuary.

Pelham Community Church has 200 active members and about 250 people on the membership roll. Smiles said it all when the

members walked into their new, beautiful sanctuary and sat down for the dedication service.

"The purpose of today was to officially open the new expanded sanctuary and to dedicate it to the glory of God," Durst said.

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LOCAL NEWS

HEALTH CARE

Business has say in NHS plan

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Access to local hospitals ought to be included in a vision of health care that will guide the growth of Niagara Health System for the next decade.

That was the message from about a dozen Welland area business representatives who shared their thoughts about a vision statement proposed by the NHS, as part of the development of a new strategic plan.

"I would like to see something in there about close proximity or something saying that communities could have and be entitled to have a hospital," said Faye Sutons, from Welland business Write for You.

She was one of several people at the meeting who shared similar thoughts during the meeting, organized in cooperation with Welland-Pelham Chamber of Commerce at Fuzzy Logic restaurant.

Consultant Richard Delaney from Delaney and Associates led the discussion about the strategic plan development and vision statement.

The proposed document speaks of providing the best care possible for patients, but Len Stolk from Stolk Construction said access could be a barrier to achieving that goal.

"It's hard to be the best when people feel that they can't access (services) easily," he said.

"You have a new hospital in St. Catharines, and it's fine for cancer treatment or something major ... but for minor ailments, a sick child with a fever or something like that, it's a long trip to go."

The last line of the proposed vision statement is: "Compassion is, and always will be, our core."

But Welland resident Maggie Murray

NIAGARA HEALTH
SYSTEM PROPOSED
VISION STATEMENT

"Each day we dedicate ourselves to our patients and their families, as if we were family too.

Staff, physicians and volunteers are empowered to collaborate as trusted partners, together with patients, families and NHS health partners, to produce the best health outcomes possible. We continue to learn, improve and innovate to provide the best care possible for patients in their time of need.

"We meet challenges with excitement, passion, integrity and professionalism. 'Compassion is, and always will be, our core'.

pointed out: "If you don't have accessibility, where is the compassion?"

NHS board member Bunny Alexander said the strategic plan is part of a "huge renewal" for the health system.

"We're looking for your input into the development of our 10-year plan," Alexander said. "It sounds like a long way out but that's where we need to be looking."

"This is our first real strategic plan for the Niagara Health System," she added. Although the health system has developed plans in the past, there was "never anything as significant as what we're doing here."

Past plans, Alexander added, did not include input from the community.

"This is new and very important."

She said the plan will serve as a map for the future, describing it as "an expression of how we, as staff, volunteers, physicians and the board, will create the future that we want to see for health care



ALLAN BENNER/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Kerri Gruarin from the YMCA shares ideas about the development of a new strategic plan for the Niagara Health System, during a stakeholder meeting organized by the Welland Pelham Chamber of Commerce, Monday. Pictured with Gruarin are, from left, Dan Lynch from BioLinc and NHS board member Bunny Alexander, on Monday.

in Niagara."

And developing a vision statement is the first step towards developing that strategic plan.

"Once we know where we're going then we'll look at how do we behave, what are the values that we'll use to operate the NHS"

she said. "Then we'll decide what are the goals that we need to set and how are we going to measure it achieve the desired future."

In addition to community stakeholder meetings, NHS spokesman Brady Wood said, the health system is also planning a

series of 10 public meetings in the months to come to hear from the community as well.

Wood said the strategic plan would be complete in 2016.

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Genuine action on refugee file good

It's noble to be moved by the heart, and necessary to be governed by the head.

This past weekend's announcement that the federal government will speed the relocation of 10,000 Syrian refugees to Canada is a welcome, concrete response to a humanitarian crisis that has captured the conscience of Canadians.

There has been an outpouring from our citizens, church groups, municipalities and provinces wanting to know, above all else, that we have done everything we can to avoid

seeing more images like that of young Alan Kurdi lying dead on a Turkish beach.

Those hearts are in the right place. We are a nation of newcomers. We welcome those people in need.

But if election campaigns are, as prime minister Kim Campbell was once quoted as saying, "no time to discuss issues of importance," they may be a worse time still to debate the details of the appropriate response to a human tragedy of this scale.

Petty politics have clouded this conversation from the beginning. This is not the fare for political stump

speeches. These are matters of life and death that need a practical response.

What we as Canadians believe to be right, to be good, to be just, will always motivate our political policies.

But we need more than just goodwill. We need logical, thought-out approaches.

When Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau calls for 25,000 refugees to be brought to Canada by year's end, we assume his heart is in the right place. But when he does not answer simple questions of how he would achieve that goal — other than to promise a dollar figure and to say his party will have

"the political will," voters are left to question whether he can live up to his promises.

Immigration Minister Chris Alexander said Saturday that Canada will appoint a special co-ordinator to handle the file of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. More visa officers will be deployed overseas. Syrians will be assumed to qualify for refugee status unless there is specific proof they do not.

Are these measures enough? Perhaps not. But we are now seeing first steps to turn our collective goodwill into real, genuine action.

Shipwrecks — Pengall

SKIP GILLHAM
For Postmedia Network

Pengall was a French flag bulk carrier that had been built at La Seyne in 1959.

The 172.5-metre-long vessel was diesel powered and able to carry in the range of 19,500 tonnes of cargo.

The ship did not come through the St. Lawrence Seaway until 1970 and was sold for Greek flag service in 1974. Renamed *Queen of Cephalonia*, the ship sustained heavy bottom damage from a grounding at Ronne Bank, in the Baltic Sea off the coast of East Germany on Sept. 15, 1975.

The vessel was refloated on Sept. 24 and laid up at Dunkirk, France. It was not economically feasible to repair the ship so, after being idle, it was sold to shipbreakers in Spain.

Queen of Cephalonia departed under tow on April 28, 1977. It arrived at Bilbao, Spain, on May 3 where, beginning in June, the hull was dismantled for recycling by Hierros Ardes.

HANDOUT/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Pengall is shown in Sault Ste. Marie in 1970 in this Tom Manse photo, courtesy of Roger LeLievre.



POLICE

Daytime break-ins raise alarm

JULIE JOCSAK
Postmedia Network

Niagara Regional Police are reminding people to lock up their valuables following a string of daytime break-ins.

"So far, between three communities, I think we have 10," Const. Phil Gavin said of incidents that have been reported in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Grimsby and Pelham.

Only of the few break-ins involved forced entry, and police are not sure at this time whether the crimes are connected.

"We can't say that 100 per

cent. There are elements that could suggest that they were, and there are elements that suggest that they weren't," he said. "We've seen the theft of jewelry in more than one occurrence, where it appears that jewelry is targeted."

"We are seeing that in the daytime break-and-enters, there are some pieces that would suggest some of them certainly are connected."

The best way to avoid becoming a victim — lock up your valuables.

"I think from an overall policing perspective, what we see most often is when people are

victims of crime, is not locking up there valuables," Gavin said. "Not locking your car or not locking the side door on the garage."

"That would stop so much crime if people just locked up their belongings."

While entry is forced in some instances, this isn't always the case.

"The large majority is checking to see if the door is open, and it is a crime of opportunity," Gavin said.

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Michael Mann

Michael is a member of the corporate-commercial team at Lancaster, Brooks & Welch, where he provides advice regarding the various methods of carrying on a business. He assists in the incorporation and organization of companies and drafts security agreements, shareholder agreements, leases, franchise agreements and other documents of a corporate or commercial nature for clients. Michael also provides services as a registered trademark agent.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ **NIAGARA REGIONAL EXHIBITION:** Welland welcomes fall with annual tradition

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FRANKI IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Jenn Ruccazy competes in a dash for cash competition at the Niagara Regional Exhibition on Saturday.

NRE fares well in 163rd year

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network
It's a 163-year-old tradition that the board of the Niagara

Regional Exhibition refuses to let die.

The Welland fair ran last Thursday through Sunday and featured horse and live-

stock displays, an agriculture show, a midway full of rides, food vendors and plenty of entertainment.

Despite a rainy Saturday, NRE board member Arthur Gill said attendance was a little bit higher than last year.

Amber Gilbert, first vice-president of the NRE, said the fair brought in more entertainment, new musical acts, two demolition derbies and a full horse breed display this year to draw people in.

"We have a full crew that is fighting hard to keep the fair alive," Gilbert said.

The fair, aside from the typical attractions of rides, junk food and music, features a large agricultural component. Horse shows, cattle shows, goat shows, vegetable shows, poultry shows and much more comprise a large part of the Welland fair schedule.

Both Gill and Gilbert said it's important that people who may not be exposed to farming on a regular basis check

the fair out.

"It's important that the people from today, the kids from today, learn that your food doesn't just come from a grocery store shelf," Gilbert said, "It comes from a farm before it gets to that shelf."

"That's the main thing you've got to teach the people," said Gill, "We're lucky that we have the animals that we have."

Gilbert said she would like to see the fair continue to grow and equal historic highs in attendance. She said fair is already looking at ways to improve.

"We're already starting to plug away for next year, and see where we can improve next year, and we're always looking for volunteers."

Gilbert said there are several committees that people are encouraged to join. For more information on volunteering, contact the NRE at 905-735-6413 or email info@niagararegionalexhibition.com.

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Thursday, September 31	10:00-11:00 am

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Interested in joining a Walking Club? Then join ours! Tuesdays at Pelham Arena from 9–10 am & Thursdays at Fonthill Bandshell from 9–10:30 am. For more info, contact (905) 892-2607 ext. 329.

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Is your child ready to stay home alone? The Home Alone Safety for Kids program helps children and their families get ready for their child's first steps towards independence and being without adult supervision. This safety program is ideally suited for children ages 9-12 years old.

Safety and accident prevention are the common theme throughout the program. Cost is \$50 and includes a pizza lunch. Course will run from 9:00 am-4:00 pm at the Pelham Arena, 1120 Haist St. in Fonthill.

Registration is available online at pelham.ca or at Town Hall, 20 Pelham Town Square, Fonthill. Contact Julie Cook at jcook@pelham.ca or 905-892-2607 ext. 329 for more details.

LOCAL NEWS

■ CHARITY

United Way announces 2015 target

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

United Way South Niagara has kicked off its 2015 fundraising campaign.

With a goal of \$850,000 — the same goal as was set for the 2014 campaign — the organization is working on engaging with the community to encourage people to dig deep and to give.

At a kick-off breakfast last week, United Way South Niagara executive director Tamara Coleman-Lawrie announced the campaign target, and spoke to a room full of guests and dignitaries about the prevalence of poverty in the region.

She said it continues to be important that people understand what the United Way does and support the organization in investing into services in the community that are working to help those in need.

"I think it's really around

understanding that holistic approach to everything, you know," Coleman-Lawrie said in an interview after the event. "If we can wrap services around people and all of the agencies that are providing care can work together to wrap around that support system that's really going to help an individual in need to move towards lifelong success."

On board for this year's campaign as donor matches are John and Rebecca Clark, owners of M.T. Bellies and Riverstone Event Centre. They will be matching donations by new donors up to \$20,000. They also continue to hold their annual It's a Wonderful Life event as a fundraiser for the United Way.

"We experienced some hardship in our lives there and at a time when things were looking a little bleak for us, support from some great friends and the community en-



John and Rebecca Clark speak at United Way South Niagara's 2015 campaign kick-off at Sparrow Lakes Golf Club on Wednesday.

mass that supported us spiritually, monetarily ... and we just found the right thing to do is pay that back," said John Clark.

Milan Pental, senior investment adviser at Pental-Lewis

Wealth Management Group, a branch of National Bank is on as this year's leadership match, pledging to match donations from new business donors up to \$20,000.

While speaking at last week's

breakfast, Pental said that fundraising efforts have been increasingly difficult due to the loss of large industries with deep pockets that the community could go to.

"We need to think outside

the box," he said.

Among several other speakers at the event was Stacey Terry, executive director of Distress Centre Niagara, who spoke to the necessity of United Way funds for her organization — which offers support to people in crisis.

Terry took the crowd through what a typical night at the centre might sound like — outlining some of the different issues people call in to talk about and how volunteers can help.

She said to people wondering where their dollars go when they donate to the United Way, "34 times a day or 240 times a week, your dollars go right into the community," referencing the average number of calls the centre receives.

To learn more or to donate visit www.unitedwaysouthniagara.ca or call 905-735-0490.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ **THERAPY:** EquineAbility Niagara teaching students with different abilities to ride



FRANKI IKEMAN/
POSTMEDIA
NETWORK

Above:
Jackson
Wyatt, 14,
trots with the
guidance of
instructor
Angie
Ruigrok
during his
lesson at
EquineAbility
Saturday in
Port
Colborne.

Empowerment through horses

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

For the Wyatt family Saturday mornings are spent waking up early and heading to the barn.

The family volunteers at EquineAbility's Port Colborne farm, where they muck stalls, help with chores and take care of the horses.

"Our family of six has been volunteering here for the better part of a year, and it's been the most amazing and transformative experience," Lianne Wyatt said. "Ours is a special-needs family. My husband, my two sons all have a diagnosis of autism and ADHD and my eldest daughter has a diagnosis of anxiety and OCD and we find when we come here, those symptoms that trouble them tend to dissipate."

The children are involved in the therapeutic riding program at EquineAbility in some way. Wyatt's two sons, Jackson and Matthew, take weekly lessons and her eldest daughter, Olivia, volunteers leading students in the program, and is hoping to get her Equine Therapy certification eventually. Her youngest daughter, Rachel, is not a part of the therapeutic riding but does

take lessons and volunteers her time at the farm.

At first the family got involved simply to spend time with horses.

"The riding came as an afterthought, but the benefits have been unbelievable," she said. "We've watched core strength develop in Matthew, we've watched it build self-confidence and self-esteem."

"The kids come home feeling more capable. It's incredible, they've really grown to love it."

Wyatt said in terms of social development, her children are interacting with the horses in special way to allow them to communicate more effectively.

"Something about horses really touches people on a soul-deep level, and we have yet to find anything like this so we're really excited to be here," she said. "To be able to care for a horse, being the majestic beast that it is, I think it's really empowering."

Angie Ruigrok founded EquineAbility in 2010, and had been teaching therapeutic riding for about 10 years before that. She is a certified intermediate instructor with the Canadian Therapeutic Riding Association, and her

utes in the ring on horseback working on a variety of exercises, followed by 15 minutes in the barn learning day-to-day horse care skills such as grooming, tacking and barn care.

The horses are not typical lesson horses either, Ruigrok said.

She said even the quietest and most experienced lesson horse or pony would take about six months to learn what is being asked of them as a therapeutic riding horse.

"The biggest thing is we ask them to not only listen to the rider's aids, but there's a lot they need to learn to ignore," Ruigrok said, "because a lot of our riders, they may have tone, they may be fidgety in the saddle, so they need to be able to tolerate all of those extra sensations and be able to kind of pick out which of those sensations are actually asking for

something and which ones are just kind of that background noise of the rider.

"It does take a special kind of horse to be that tolerant."

EquineAbility recently held its annual horse show, an opportunity for riders in the program to show off their skills, get some feedback and a taste for competition in a low-pressure atmosphere.

"It's a ton of fun. The riders really enjoy it, they get to show off for their family, their friends, whoever they want to come and see them and at the same time get a little bit of feedback on how they're doing. It's a very low-key," Ruigrok said.

For more information on EquineAbility visit www.equineabilityniagara.com.

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■ EDUCATION

Catholic school board enrolment increases

WAYNE CAMPBELL
For Postmedia Network

Niagara Catholic schools welcomed 221 more students than expected when the new school year started.

The increase raised Niagara Catholic District School Board enrolment to 21,951 in the elementary and secondary schools.

The elementary sector led the way when 305 more students than budgeted registered, to increase enrolment to 14,800.

Secondary schools saw a drop of 108 students, to 7,148.

Education director John Crocco said the decrease in high school students was partly caused by students leaving the region, switching to college programs or going into apprenticeship programs.

The increase in elementary registration was from families moving into the

area.

For the past six years, the Catholic board has provided a summer telephone registration service. Signs in front of schools advertise the phone number and staff at the board office take the calls and register students.

People familiar with the Catholic system can sign up as they move into the area, Crocco said.

"They don't have to wait and we don't lose them."

With the increase in enrolment, all teachers with the board have jobs.

At the end of June, a shuffle normally takes place with teachers retiring or departing as board administrators estimate September enrolment numbers. Some teachers are laid off.

The increased enrolment led to a recall of all full-time teachers and could mean hiring a few more assistants, staff told the trustees.

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IN BRIEF

Ombudsman now takes school complaints

Through the summer Niagara Catholic has prepared for the arrival of the ombudsman.

As of Sept. 1, the Ontario ombudsman began to take complaints related to schools.

The independent officer of the Ontario legislature had his role expanded under Bill 8 to include schools, municipalities and universities in addition to 500 provincial agencies it now oversees. In January 2015, municipalities and universities fell in line. Education director John Crocco told the school board he has sent the ombudsman's office information about how Niagara Catholic handles complaints.

"We are very open and transparent," he said. "We outline what to do right on our pamphlet" listing schools and staff.

"You have to work through it starting with the individual involved and go up from there." Some people, he said, "want to jump

the queue" about concerns over bullying, administration and school buildings.

The ombudsman can deal with individual complaints, investigate unresolved local issues, conduct large-scale investigations (such as lottery security, property tax assessment or hydro bills) and recommend changes.

The ombudsman cannot overturn government body decisions, issue penalties or investigate court decisions, private corporations, municipal police or the federal government.

Crocco said the ombudsman wanted to know the local board has ways to handle complaints.

"We work things through," he said.

"Niagara Catholic does an excellent job." Ombudsman services are free and can be obtained at www.ombudsman.on.ca.

The legislature has appointed Barbara Finlay acting ombudsman in a wrangle over the next five-year term for the position. Andre Marin has served for the past 10 years.

Two school projects see delays

Two Niagara Catholic school construction projects have faced delays.

A new \$3.6-million St. Martin elementary in Smithville has a construction funding shortfall. Niagara Catholic is talking to the Ministry of Education to resolve it.

The new school on a two-hectare site will add room for 155 more students, bringing capacity to 454 West Lincoln students. It is scheduled to open in September 2016.

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LOCAL NEWS

WINE FESTIVAL

Mayors get together to stomp out poverty

JULIE JOCSAK
Postmedia Network

Grape juice flew while mayors, councillors, IceDogs, Grape Kings and kids tried to Stomp Out Poverty.

The annual Mayor's Invitational Grape Stomp has been part of the Niagara Wine Festival for years but this year a new element was added.

St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik challenged other local mayors to a food collection drive.

Lord Mayor Pat Darte of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Mayor Douglas Joyner of West Lincoln, Mayor April Jeffs of Wainfleet, Mayor John Maloney of Port Colborne and Mayor Walter Sendzik of St. Catharines took part in the messy tradition. Three councillors, Sergio Paone of Thorold, Bonnie Fokkens of Welland and Mike Strange of Niagara Falls, also took part.

The participants had 60 seconds to squish the grapes in the wine barrels with their bare feet. The juice was then measured to determine the winner.

Spectators in the front row had a hard time keeping clean as the grapes and juice started to fly.

St. Catharines Mayor Walter Sendzik took home the overall top prize for the best combination of grape stomping and collecting food.

"It's very gratifying," Sendzik said. "You look at someone like Mike Strange or Lord Mayor Darte, and you don't know what their capabilities are. You go in kind of nervous and it makes you stomp a little harder."

Grape Growers of Ontario donated the grapes for the event.

This was the first year a food drive was part of the grape stomp, everyone liked the idea, and it looks like it is here to stay, Sendzik said.

"I think this is a new concept that we are going to continue to do annually," he said. "I just think the community really came out. I want to thank the people that came out and supported St. Catharines and Thorold Community Care on my behalf. It all goes to a good cause; it's a great event."

Maloney came out ahead in the food drive, collecting 3,178 kilograms for Port Cares.

Sendzik came second with 933 kg for Community Care St. Catharines. Joyner came third with 227 kilograms for West Lincoln Community Care while Paone came fourth with 222 kg for Community Care of Thorold.

Lord Mayor Pat Darte came fifth with 216 kg for Newark Neighbours and Fokkens came sixth with 215 kg for Open Arms Mission and The Hope Centre. Jeffs came seventh with 103 kg for the Volunteer Firefighter Christmas Basket Program and Strange raised 42 kg of food for Project SHARE.

The total weight of the food collected for each participant was used to calculate a base amount



RUE JOCSAK / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

The top three finalists, left, councillor Sergio Paone of Thorold, St. Catharines mayor Walter Sendzik and councillor Mike Strange of Niagara Falls, pose for a photo following the annual Mayor's Invitational Grape Stomp. The competition was to see who could stomp out the most juice during the Niagara Wine Festival in Montebello Park, St. Catharines on Saturday.

of juice to start the grape stomp.

For example, Sendzik collected 933 kg of food. St. Catharines has a population of 131,000, so Sendzik was given just 1.57 ounces of juice to start his stomp. Darte collected 216 kg of food from a population of 15,400 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Darte started the grape stomp with 3.08 ounces.

Other stompers included rep-

resentatives from Niagara first responders who participated in the Local Hero's Stomp. Three members of the Niagara IceDogs, Ben Jones, Hayden Davis and Christian Brixi, had their own stomp. Past and present Grape Kings, Kevin Buis of Glenlake Vineyards and Jamie Slingerland of Pillitteri Winery, participated in a grape stomp. There was a stomp for children.

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■ **EVENTS:** Ride, walk for a cause

Ride for Refuge coming to Pelham

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

Get your bikes tuned and your walking shoes shined for Ride for Refuge.

Ride for Refuge comes to the Niagara Region for the second year and will be hosted by Pelham Friends Church in Fonthill on Saturday, Oct. 3.

There are 11 charities and 14 teams signed up for the event. Organizations are chosen to participate in the nationwide Ride for Refuge

based on their work with people who are either displaced, vulnerable or exploited.

Money raised by these charities will go towards funding different programs.

"The event draws people together to be passionate at the same time about the work that they really are engaged in outside of this event," said Pastor Mathew Bradbury of Pelham Friends Church.

Open Arms Mission in Welland and Christian Home-

zons are two ride partners involved in the event. Each charity has a team riding and will receive funding.

Money raised by Open Arms Mission through the ride event will go towards the organization's budget.

That budget funds programs like teaching people how to can fresh produce or healing courses. The budget also helps people who are struggling with different issues, like homelessness in Welland.

Jeff Aikden, a pastor at Open Arms Mission, said the ride consists of not just supporters. "It's clients, so riding with clients and understanding there is no us and them, this is a we event, this is everything."

The ride includes 25- and 10-km bike routes and a 5-km walking route. Registration is at 8 a.m. The ride starts at 9 a.m., and the walk begins at 9:30 a.m. at Pelham Friends Church at 940 Hault St.

Bradbury said the event is

for everyone, not just cycling enthusiasts.

"It's amazing how people come pumped up that they are going to do this. Some people come and have never ridden 25km at one time — it's a challenge," Bradbury said.

About 125 riders and 45 volunteers are expected to participate. People who want to donate, but can't participate in the walk or ride, can volunteer their time.

"We get excellent support

from the town of Pelham ... we have a lot of opportunities for people to participate," said Bradbury.

There is a \$25 registration fee for all riders over the age of 13. Riders can choose to opt out of paying the registration fee by committing to fundraising minimum of \$75 for youths or \$150 for adults.

For more information and to sign up for the ride visit <https://rideforrefuge.org/location/niagara-region>.

■ **CONSTRUCTION:** Power Canal Bridge closed

Construction begins on Merrittville bridge

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

If you're travelling on Merrittville Highway, expect to be rerouted at the Power Canal Bridge in Thonk.

The replacement of the Power Canal Bridge began

Thursday and will continue until August 2016.

Ron Tripp, Niagara Region commissioner of public work, said he is very hopeful the replacement will be finished in just under a year. The bridge should be open for the

new school year.

"We don't have any concerns about traffic," he said.

Drivers should use Highway 406 or Beaverdam Road, Collier Road and St. David's Road as alternative routes.

Brock Golf Course on Mer-

rirtville Highway will remain open during construction. Road closures have just begun and Jennifer Julie, part owner of the golf course, said it is hard to tell how the closures will affect business.

"It's the first day that it's

affecting us. It's not looking great. There are road closure signs surrounding us," she said.

"The road closure signs could potentially deter people from us," she said.

Julie plans to call the region to ask if the golf course can put up signage to let the public know they are still open.

With the bridge so close to Brock University the closure could affect traffic to the school.

The bridge closure "will affect us a little bit, but we have communicated with staff and students," said Donna Moody, director of campus security services and emergency preparedness at Brock University.

Moody said a large number of staff and students come from the south and take Merrittville Highway. Knowing this, Brock has been communicating with the community about the closure for a while now.

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■ ACCOLADES

John Turner to receive NPCA environmental award

MICHELLE ALLENBERG
Postmedia Network

Former Canadian prime minister John Turner today is to receive Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority's first Water and Environmental Leadership Award.

Turner served as Canada's 17th prime minister, from June 30 to Sept. 17 in 1984. This award will be the first environmental award he has received.

NPCA chose Turner as its first recipient because of his environ-

mental work.

"He has a national interest with the environment — always a lot of passion for the Great Lakes and water. We wanted to recognize his national passion towards the environment," said CAO Carmen D'Angelo.

NPCA is hosting its award gala at Queen's Landing in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Meanwhile, NPCA is establishing a scholarship with Brock University. The scholarship will be given to a second-year Brock

student pursuing environmental studies. Money raised through seat sales for the gala will go towards the scholarship. The scholarship will be \$5,000 for its first year.

Other money raised will go towards funding different programs run by NPCA.

The venue is small and there are 160 seats available with limited seating left. Tickets are \$300, but guests will receive a \$200 tax receipt.

NPCA usually hosts a golf

tournament to raise money, but D'Angelo said there are too many golf tournaments to compete with. The authority decided to host a gala instead.

"We wanted to be creative and do something different. We wanted to establish an environmental leadership award," D'Angelo said.

In the future the award will be given to local residents, agencies or companies.

michelle.allenberg@postmedia.ca

■ HEARTLAND FOREST

Etsy community uniting in Falls Saturday

ALISON LANGLEY
Postmedia Network

More than 30 Canadian cities will host a one-day marketplace celebrating the Etsy community on Saturday, including Niagara Falls.

Local Etsy sellers will showcase their hand-made and vintage wares at Heartland Forest from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. as part of Etsy: Made in Canada.

The Niagara marketplace will include original artwork, furniture, decor and more from 40 Niagara artisans, said Erin Snow, event co-ordinator.

This is the first time Niagara Falls has hosted a Made in Canada event.

"We can't wait to demonstrate what a passionate group of artisans live right here in Niagara, so make sure you come by to see us in action," said Snow, who offers aromatherapy products and essential oils through her Etsy store Chasing Clouds.

Several food trucks will be at Heartland Forest for the event as well as local wineries and breweries.

Snow said Heartland Forest was a perfect fit for Etsy.

"One of the things that is important to me is working with non-profit organizations and Heartland Forest, to some, is an unknown gem. I want to bring awareness to them as well."

Launched in 2005, Etsy is an online marketplace for hand-made items.

■ ELECTION NOTEBOOK

Fringe candidates vying for Niagara Centre

Ballots for voters in the Niagara Centre riding have grown by a few more candidates.

Ron Walker has returned to represent the Communist Party of Canada.

Jody DiBartolomeo signed on last week to run for the Animal Alliance Environment Voters Party of Canada, which became registered as a federal political party in late 2005.

Walker, who registered a few weeks ago, is no stranger to campaigning, having represented the Marxist-Leninist in the area for 10 previous elections. He earned 71 votes in the 2011 election.

DiBartolomeo represented the New Democratic Party in 2004 and 2006, and ran as an independent in 2008, earning 569 votes.

Niagara Centre election ballots also include Green Party candidate David Clow, Vance Badagway for the Liberals, Conservative candidate Leanna Villalta, and incumbent New Democratic candidate Malcolm Allan.

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■ NIAGARA

Whose vote is it anyway?

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Some feel it's a necessary move. Others fear it could be detrimental to Niagara.

But the discussion will soon be on the table, whether the Region should alter its process for selecting a regional chair.

As is, the chair is chosen by elected members of regional council. But a push began last year to see the position filled by the will of voters.

The topic was set to reach the table at Wednesday's corporate services committee meeting.

It's a conversation St. Catharines Coun. Bruce Timms, who has long been in support of changing the model, is looking forward to having.

He hopes Niagara will follow in the footsteps of Durham Region, which went through the process of a public referendum. Based on the results, it changed the system to allow voters to elect the chair.

"The role, policy and direction of the Region needs to get public support, public endorsement, and that doesn't come under the current scenario," Timms said.

At the very minimum, we should do the referendum for this coming election, still three years away. But I would like to see us take the step forward toward a regional chair elected at large."

Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney, on the other hand, believes it's a move that could leave the lakeside city high and dry.

"For me, in reality, it would be almost impossible to have a chair elected from Port Colborne or the southern tier because the greater population base is in the north," he said, stressing his support for the status quo.

"That's what I feel would be in the best interest of the City of Port Colborne."

Maloney also raised concerns over the cost of campaigning across the region for the position.

"It would be very expensive and in most cases beyond the personal resources of most," he said.

"So your chair would either have to be independently very wealthy or reliant on the generosity of donors, predominantly big businesses, and then there's the possibility of influence on the chair from those who helped put him there."

Welland Coun. George Marshall previously supported the status quo, but has since begun to change his mind.

"It's an erosion, not a reaction. I believe right now it should be an election at large. I'm surprised even myself to say that," he said.

"Looking at best practice and what's occurred over the years, it may be worth going another way."

Marshall previously had concerns an elected model would mean "someone from St. Catharines wins, just based on population."

But council's selection of past chairs from Niagara-on-the-Lake — one of the smallest municipalities in Niagara — could mean otherwise, he said.

"I hope it doesn't become who has the most money or ideological direction, whether it be a Tory, New Democrat or Liberal. I'd hate to see that happen, although it's certainly alive and well in council today. I don't think that's a good thing. I don't think that's

healthy."

Niagara Falls Coun. Selma Volpanti said she firmly believes change isn't warranted.

"I compare it to the Canadian parliamentary system, where the members of the office of the majority party really pick their own head," she said.

"I think that's absolutely the way we should continue doing it, because that's the way we've done it and it's worked very well," she said.

"I don't see any reason for (change) because we live a parliamentary system where we don't elect our prime minister. We elect the people who elect him."

For St. Catharines Mayor Walter Szendzik, it's a discussion that needs to be had.

"The time has come to seriously consider it and look at the merits on which it stands," he said.

Other communities, including some of the Region look to as benchmarks, have successfully made and embraced the change, he said.

"It's time for us to ... If council reviews it and sees it as a move that will give a stronger voice to the region of Niagara, then I think it's a road we have to go down."

Pelham Mayor Dave Augustyn, who initially brought the issue forward to council last year, believes it's a move that would allow council to be "more open, transparent and accountable" to residents.

"Right now, not personalities involved, but the regional chair is essentially being appointed by colleagues around the table and is accountable only to those colleagues," he said, adding a chair elected at large would be accountable to residents across the region.

"Having the chair elected at large gives that really strong voice that we're hoping to achieve as the Region to that individual. That individual would speak for the majority of electors across Niagara."

Approval for change by council would mark the beginning of the process, Augustyn said, adding the next step would be to approach the Ontario Minister of municipal affairs for permission to investigate the option further.

Public consultation and discussions at municipal councils would then have to be held.

"It's a long process," he said, which is why it's important to get the ball rolling well in advance of the next municipal election.

More than a change to the process for selecting the regional chair, Lincoln Coun. Bill Regan believes Niagara could "benefit tremendously if we did a serious adjustment in our governance."

That change, he said, could begin with having the chair elected by the citizens.

"I think I've always been afraid that going through would introduce partisan party politics into regional governance, but unfortunately it's happened already anyway."

Fort Erie Coun. Sandy Annunziata wants to hear more about how other communities have fared with the change.

"I'm all for exhausting all opportunities to have conversations and have those dialogues with people who have gone through this before," he said, referencing Durham as well as Waterloo Region, where citizens have been electing the chair since 1997.

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LOCAL NEWS

■ ARTS

'This is going to transform how we experience the arts'

KARENA WALTER
Postmedia Network

Brock University's new downtown arts school is one of the most important milestones of St. Catharines revitalization, president Jack Lightstone said.

The university envisioned a downtown that could be an arts, culture, entertainment and digital media hub when it decided to move, he said.

"We would be part of something that was greater than ourselves,"

Lightstone was speaking to hundreds of people who gathered outside the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts for its grand opening Friday.

The school is located behind St. Paul Street near Meridian Centre and the new St. Catharines Performing Arts Centre. Designed by Diamond

Schmitt Architects, its inside a renovated Canada Hair Cloth building, which dates to the late 1800s, and newly built spaces.

About 500 students in drama, visual arts, music and arts and culture began classes in the facility on Sept. 9.

Lightstone said the vision to create a new hub for the city started with former dean of humanities Rosemary Drage Hale. He said to have a vision and move it to an actual entity takes a lot of work and support. The city, provincial government and others believed in it.

While there was a lot of skepticism, Lightstone said hope and optimism replaced skepticism when Marilyn I. Walker, a textile artist, and her husband Norris made a "transformative" gift of \$15 million.

"When they made that commit-

ment, everyone knew we had no choice but to make it happen," Lightstone said.

Marilyn Walker was in attendance last Friday, but her health prevented her from making a speech. Husband Norris Walker said that the school is a world-class facility that will inspire students and faculty.

"Marilyn and I are excited to have played a small part in this endeavour," he said, after which the couple received a standing ovation.

Mayor Walter Szendzik said Marilyn Walker transformed a school and a city. "That is a legacy that will never be forgotten," he said to her.

Szendzik said a lot of people didn't know the depth, skill and creativity of Brock's arts school when it was secluded on campus. Now the city will be energized by arts and creativity.



BOB THYMEZSYN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK
Students look over a quilt titled The Tree of Learning while a crowd of 400 people filled the outer entry as Brock University's Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts officially celebrated its grand opening Friday.

"This is going to transform how we experience the arts."

The Ontario government contributed \$26.1 million towards the facility's total \$45.5-million cost.

St. Catharines MPP Jim Bradley said the school is a wonderful asset and investment in the future because of the students who will use it.

It joins other new developments that are transforming the downtown. Bradley said anyone who hasn't been to St. Catharines in a while and drives down Hwy. 406 are blown

BY THE NUMBERS

95,000 – Square feet of the facility
\$45.5 million – Cost of the building
500 – Number of students

away by what they see in the heart of the city.
"There's a new feeling of optimism in downtown St. Catharines."

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■ **MUSIC:** New venue proves popular after old stage damaged by flood

Niagara Concerts continues its comeback

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Two years after nearly pulling the plug, Niagara Concerts is enjoying a resurgence.

At least it feels like one to concert manager John Anstruther. Even if crowds can't match the constant

sellouts of a decade ago, there's optimism heading into the company's 42nd season instead of the uncertainty of recent years.

It turns out one of the highest setbacks may have inadvertently saved the local institution.

In July of 2013, a vicious storm flooded the 1,000-seat

theatre at Kingston College on Epworth Circle, the company's home for decades. The theatre immediately closed for mould removal, forcing Niagara Concerts to find a new home for its 2013 season.

The Scotiabank Convention Centre was the only real option in Niagara

Falls, recalls Anstruther. He wasn't sure how the company's aging subscribers would handle the move. He was worried it would be Niagara Concerts' final season.

It became a fruitful partnership. Audiences liked the new venue, and the convention centre loved adding concerts to its schedule. In

turn, convention centre staff took over much of the promotion and production.

"It's given us a breath of fresh air," he says. "We know things are being done and being looked after. We got an issue, they deal with it immediately. Every (performer) we've had there up to this point is really pleased with everything that's gone on."

Unlike past seasons, concertgoers now have reserved seating, with plenty of parking. The result is more subscribers this season, with a younger demographic showing up.

"I was worried, I thought we'd be even lower with subscriptions," says Anstruther, "but it's turned around quite nicely."

"We're not where we were four or five years ago with a thousand (subscribers), but we are over 500 now, which has taken the edge off."

The new season kicks off Friday with Lighthouse, the Canadian art rock band behind *Sunny Days* and *Pretty Lady* who won three straight Junos for the year from 1972 to 1974.

From there it will be

WHAT: Niagara Concerts 2015/16 Season

WHEN: Sept. 25 to May 14

WHERE: Scotiabank Convention Centre, 6815 Stanley Ave., Niagara Falls

TICKETS: scotiabank.ticketpro.ca or 1-888-655-9090

returning Niagara Concerts favourites Lunch at Allen's Oct. 29, Matt Dusk Nov. 28, The Leahys March 19 and Jarvis Church May 14.

Partnering with the convention centre has Anstruther thinking a more diverse schedule is possible soon.

"I'm hoping this is step one of probably a three- or four-year process to get and get in some more popular talent for people in the 35-to-60 demographic."

It could also lead to an expanded season, but Anstruther is proceeding with caution.

"We have to prove ourselves, that we can put enough bums in the seat that we at least cover costs. As a nonprofit, we can't take a loss."

john.law@sunmedia.ca



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HANDOUT / POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Niagara Concerts brings The Leahys to the Scotiabank Convention Centre March 19. The company's 42nd season opens Friday with Lighthouse.



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LOCAL NEWS

■ MUSIC

Niagara Rhythm tops NMA nominations

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Veteran Niagara-on-the-Lake musician Steve Goldberger and St. Catharines folk rockers Odds & Ends lead the way for the eighth annual Niagara Music Awards.

Goldberger, one of the region's busiest guitarists with his band the Niagara Rhythm. Scene, is up for eight awards, including album and songwriter of the year.

"I can say it's always a thrill to have one's work acknowledged by our peers," says Goldberger, who performs regularly at the Old Winery in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Newcomers Odds & Ends are close behind with seven nominations, including folk artist and new group of the year. The trio of Ariella Aburto, Jay Falone and Pat Shea were "thrilled" to get the news last Thursday.

"Being a musician or a vocalist feels very vulnerable most of the time," says Aburto. "You're constantly putting your heart and soul out there with very little feedback."

"These nominations tell me that we're doing something right, and that sticking with Niagara and nurturing the wonderful artistic scene we have here is what we need to keep doing."

Rugged Niagara Falls group The Rob Graham Band got news of their three nominations just over a week before



PHOTO / LADYLUCKPIUPS

St. Catharines band Odds & Ends are up for seven Niagara Music Awards Sept. 29.

they release their debut album, *Welcome to Earth*. The band is up for rising star, original song and songwriter of the year.

"We are very, very happy and excited about the nominations," says Graham. "We worked very hard this year to step it up."

Among other multiple nominees are Celtic rockers Mudmen with five, synthpop band Glass Apple Bonzai with five, metal band Crutch with four, acoustic singer Sarah Boulton with four and progressive rockers Road Waves with four.

Welland singer Jessica Wilson says she entered the awards in previous years with no luck, but ended up with two nominations this year for female vocalist and songwriter of the year.

"So many incredible people get nominated every year and I am so flattered," she says.

"Just shows to never give up on something you really want."

Nominees had to wait much longer than usual this year because of a change in the submission process. With the usual \$10 entry fee waived, more than double the usual submissions poured in.

"It was an amazing amount of entries in almost every category, and so much talent," says Niagara Music Awards co-organizer Todd Brown. "It really blew us away. For example, more than 40 artists submitted for best original song."

The only category without enough submissions for an award this year was Electronic Dance Music.

This year's awards will be handed out Tuesday at Taps Brewery in downtown Niagara Falls.

2015 NMA NOMINEES

Album of the Year:
A Book for Wanderers
Kayd

Glass Apple Bonzai
Mudmen
Road Waves
Sarah Boulton
Scott Harvey
Steve Goldberger

Adult Contemporary Artist:

Battered Egos
Jamie Derek Moore
Sarah Boulton

Country Artist:

Jamie Derek Moore
MJ Lafair
Steve Goldberger

Engineer:

Al Jandro
Glass Apple Bonzai
Steve Goldberger
Thomas Weller

Female Vocalist:

Ashlynn Vince
Blindside Incentive
Kayd

Gail Davidson
Jessica Wilson

Ladee Lix
Mel Monaco
Odds & Ends

Sammy Morrelli
Sarah Boulton
Steve Goldberger

Folk Artist:

Odds & Ends
Thomas Weller
Sarah Boulton

Heavy Metal Artist

Blindside Incentive
Crutch

Hip Hop Artist:

Deaze
Lady Larix
Joe Ari

Instrumental Artist:

Al Jandro
Bryan Sorensen
Jamie Derek Moore
Zach Preston

Zac Tieszen

Jazz Artist:

Gail Davidson
Road Waves

Male Vocalist:

A Book for Wanderers
Josh Mills
Glass Apple Bonzai
Steve Goldberger

New Artist:

Bryan Sorensen
Christian Distefano
Deaze

Josh Mills
Ladee Lix

Thomas Weller

Visca

New Group:

Blind Side Intersection
Left in Line
Odds & Ends

Road Waves

Tides

Under the Red

Original Group:

Blame the Neighbour
Blindside Incentive
Mudmen

Odds & Ends

Under the Red

Original Song:

Agatha Lafay

Bryan Sorensen

Mudmen

Odds & Ends

Rob Graham Band

Sammy Morrelli

Steve Goldberger

Steve Goldberger w/ Tim Hicks

Victoria K

Producer:

Crutch

Glass Apple Bonzai

Steve Goldberger

Progressive Rock:

Battered Egos

Blind Side Incentive

Jah Coriphones

Left in Line

Promoter:

Eric Dickson (Indoor Shoes)

Rafik Guinguis

Rising Star:

Christian Distefano

Ladee Lix

Mel Monaco

Odds & Ends

Rob Graham Band

Swishpop Styles

Tides

Zac Tieszen

Rock Artist:

Back in the Daze

Blame the Neighbour

A Book for Wanderers

Crutch

Road Waves

Tides

Under the Red

Songwriter of the Year:

A Book for Wanderers

Glass Apple Bonzai

Jessica Wilson

Josh Mills

Mudmen

Odds & Ends

Rob Graham Band

Sammy Morrelli

Sarah Boulton

Steve Goldberger

Unsung Hero (community recognition):

Burnie Brandt

Darrell Spilchuck

Eric Conlon

Kyle Whittaker

John Navaroli

Venue:

The Sanctuary (Ridgeway)

Taps (Niagara Falls)

Video:

Crutch

Joe Ari

Mel Monaco

Visca

World Music:

Mudmen

Zach Preston

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